

Sūrah Nabā'

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah Mursalāt, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference between the central themes of the two. In the previous *sūrah*, it is substantiated from historical evidence and from evidence found in the world inside man and that outside him that an essential requirement of this world being created with a purpose is that it should end on a day of judgement; on this day, the righteous should be rewarded for their deeds and the wrong-doers punished for theirs. Similarly, in this *sūrah* also, the Day of Judgement is substantiated wherein those who rebelled against God would face punishment and those who feared Him would be rewarded for this attitude. The basis of arguments is divine providence evident in every single part of the heavens and the earth.

The tone of both *sūrahs* is the same. The discourse begins with questions which can only be answered in the affirmative. This style is specifically adopted for the disbelievers who were rejecting obvious realities. Together with the arguments offered, each verse is replete with reproach and rebuke. The glad tidings for the believers are also to be understood by them in comparison with the warning sounded to these disbelievers

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-5): The disbelievers of the Day of Judgement are rebuked and admonished at the questions they foolishly pose at each other. They are informed that such is the profound nature of this news that if they even had the slightest bit of sense in them, instead of making fun of it, its fear should have given them sleepless nights.

Verses (6-17): A call to reflect on the signs of God's providence, mercy, wisdom and power which are found in every part of the earth and the heavens and what is in between them and which bear evidence that the Almighty has not created man in this world unaccountable and unchecked; there is a day which has been fixed for his accountability that is bound to come.

Verses (18-30): A portrayal of the horror of the Day of Judgement and the fate of the rebellious. Evident in this portrayal is the fact that nothing

of this world is eternal or beyond God's control; everything is subservient to Him; whenever He wants, He will have the trumpet blown in such a manner that people will rise from their graves and start to walk towards Him. The heavens, the earth, the seas and the mountains – all will be destroyed and dispersed. Hell will lie in ambush on that Day. It will become the abode of all the rebellious; all things which can cause pain to a person will be found in it and it will have nothing which will soothe or comfort a person. Each will face the deeds he had sent forward and each and every deed of his will be written in a register. He will be told that the fate he is destined to face is the natural outcome of his deeds; he will have to taste it.

Verses (31-36): A reference to the reward received by those who remained fearful of God: they will not be deprived of the reward of the minutest of their deeds; they will be rewarded for each and every virtue. They will be compensated for the harassment and hardships they faced from their opponents merely because they adhered to the truth and they will be blessed with a pure society which will not have the absurdities of the previous world.

Verses (37-40): A warning is sounded to people who are fearless of that Day because they believe in the baseless doctrine of intercession. They are told that that Day is bound to come and so he who wants to seek refuge with his Lord should adopt the path that leads to Him. In the presence of God, no one will be authorized to intercede for someone without His permission and after permission too whoever will open his mouth to speak, he will speak the truth and will dare not lie. On that Day, each person will face his deeds and the disbelievers will have to encounter anguish and yearnings.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ (١) عَنِ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢) الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ (٣) كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٤) ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٥) أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا (٦) وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا (٧) وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا (٨) وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا (٩) وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا (١٠) وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا (١١) وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا (١٢) وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا (١٣) وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا (١٤) لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا (١٥) وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا (١٦) إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفُصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (١٧) يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا (١٨) وَفُتِحَتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا (١٩) وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ

فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (٢٠) إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا (٢١) لِلظَّالِمِينَ مَابَا (٢٢) لَا يَشِينُ فِيهَا أَحَقَابًا (٢٣) لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا (٢٤) إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا (٢٥) جَزَاءً وَفَاقًا (٢٦) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا (٢٧) وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَابًا (٢٨) وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا (٢٩) فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا (٣٠) إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (٣١) حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (٣٢) وَكَوَاعِبَ أَثَرَابًا (٣٣) وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا (٣٤) لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَابًا (٣٥) جَزَاءً مِنْ رَبِّكَ عَطَاءً حِسَابًا (٣٦) رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرَّحْمَانِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا (٣٧) يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَانُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٣٨) ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَآبًا (٣٩) إِنَّا أَنْذَرْنَاكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا يَوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ ثَرَابًا (٤٠)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

What is it that these people are inquiring about? Is it something concerning the Great News about which each person has a different view? Certainly not! They shall soon come to know. Again, Certainly not! They shall soon come to know. (1-5)

Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? Not created you in pairs? Not made your sleep a means of comfort? Not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood? Not built above you seven sturdy skies and not placed in them a glowing lamp? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds so that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? – Indeed, the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (6-17)

The Day when the trumpet is sounded, all of you come forth in multitudes and the sky is flung open and therein appear gates all over and the mountains are set in motion so that they become a mirage. Indeed! Hell lurks in ambush; a place for the transgressors. They will abide therein for ages. Nothing cool will they taste therein nor will they have anything to drink except hot water and pus. A recompense according to their deeds. These people did not expect any accountability and had recklessly denied Our revelations and We have counted everything by writing it down. So taste it! We shall only increase torment for you. (18-30)

Indeed, for the God-fearing is success on that Day. Orchards and grapes; blooming maidens of equal ages and overflowing cups. They will not hear therein any nonsense or any false accusation. This will be the reward from your Lord, exactly according to their deeds. (31-36)

From the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them; the most Gracious on Whose behalf they will have no authority to say anything. On the Day when Gabriel and the angels will stand arrayed. No one will speak unless the most Gracious allows and he shall speak the truth. This Day is certain to come; so whoever wishes can make his abode towards his Lord. We have forewarned you of an imminent doom on the Day when a man will see the earning he would have sent forward, and the disbeliever will cry: "O would that I were dust!" (37-40)

Explanation

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ¹

The word عَمَّ is actually عَمَّا; however, just as in general usage the sound of certain words is suppressed, in a similar manner the sound of *alif* has been suppressed and the word is always written thus.

The word تَسَاءَلُ means to mutually ask one another about something. An inquiry is at times meant to find out and research a matter and at times it is merely to make fun and indulge in vain talk. Here this inquiry is meant to make fun. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān at various places that when the Prophet (sws) recited out *sūrahs* to the Quraysh which warned them of the Hereafter, these *sūrahs* quickly spread and became often-discussed because of their intense tone, majestic and awe-inspiring style and incontestable arguments. In order to protect their masses from this penetrating influence, the Quraysh employed various foolish measures. Amongst these measures was one in which they would make fun of the Book of God so that they could give this impression to their people that it does not merit serious attention and is merely a baseless thing blown out of proportion and that there is no need to get influenced by it. Some of them would ask how people can be re-created when their bones decay. Some others would sarcastically inquire if their ancestors would be raised to life again when they have become part of the earth and not even a trace of their graves remains. Some would vehemently express the impossibility of such an event.

They would make fun of Hell and its fire by commenting on the kind of fire it would be as it would have water and trees in it; another person would respond by saying that all this is so foolish.

When the Qur'ān informed them that nineteen angels guard Hell, they again started mocking this information. One of them said that he alone would be enough to combat a certain number of these guards and another

1. What is it that these people are inquiring about?

boasted that he would take care of the rest and as such there was nothing to worry about.

In short, whatever information about the Day of Judgement they were given, instead of seeking a lesson from it, they would try to make fun of it so that their masses were not influenced by it. It is such comments and remarks expressed by them which are termed as نَسَاءُلُ by the Qur'ān. It has then angrily inquired: What is it that they are gossiping about?

The tone of the *sūrah* can be gauged from this question with which it begins. This style informs us that the disbelievers will be told that what they are making fun of is not something to mock and make fun of; if they only think, it is something which should worry them to death and lament what they have been doing.

عَنْ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢) الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُحْتَلِفُونَ (٣)²

The word النَّبَاِ refers to some important incident or news. Although no word of interrogation is mentioned in words before this verse yet it is understood to be present before it. A very clear example of such an ellipsis can be seen in Sūrah Alam Nashrah where it is said: وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (٩٤: ١-٢) (have We not opened your heart, and relieved you of the burden which weighed down heavily on your back, (93:1-2). It is evident that no interrogative particle is mentioned in the second verse and the verse is in the form of a statement yet this interrogation is understood to be present. There are many examples of this style in the Qur'ān. In this *sūrah* also, succeeding verses depict this style. Most of our exegetes are unaware of this style and for this reason they translate such interrogative sentences as statements of fact. As a result, the real stress of the discourse is lost upon the readers because there is a great difference between a simple statement and an interrogative statement.

The meaning conveyed by the verse is: “Are these people daring to recklessly make fun of the great news which is being given to them about the arrival of the Day of Judgement in which reward and punishment is going to take place? Such is the gravity of this news that it should have made them lose their sleep and appetite; however, they are so unfortunate a people that instead of fearing such a day they are mocking it and making fun of it.

The word اِخْتِلَافٍ in اَلَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُحْتَلِفُونَ simultaneously expresses two meanings: firstly, difference in opinion and secondly, contradiction in opinion and a little deliberation shows that both these meanings are

2. Is it something concerning the Great News about which each person has a different view?

inseparable. Difference in opinion springs from contradiction in opinion. I have tried to explain at a number of places in this *tafsīr* (see, for example my explanation of 27:66) that great contradiction was found in the views of the Idolaters of Arabia about the Day of Judgement: a group among them would blatantly deny it and another which, was in majority, instead of outright denial would raise objections about it; the people of this second group would express the opinion that in the first place it was highly improbable that the Day of Judgement would come and if ever it would there should be no cause of worry as they would be returning to their deities who would save them from God's grasp. They further contended that even if they would have to face God, it was incomprehensible how He would be able to take account of all the words and deeds of so many people. They also thought that since in this world they had been blessed with affluence which showed that the Almighty was pleased with them, there was no reason they would not be blessed by Him with such honour and success in the Hereafter as well.

Besides these erroneous beliefs, they also professed certain correct ones which would actually negate their erroneous beliefs but it was against their wishes to believe in the Hereafter and the reward and punishment of that Day. For this very reason, they were not ready to assess their contradictory beliefs and thoughts and remove these contradictions in spite of repeated reminders from the Qur'ān. In this regard, it is in fact an obvious requirement of sense and reason that if a person is intellectually disturbed in a matter which relates to eternal success or loss, he should carefully listen to those who are pointing out the contradiction in his views so that he may protect himself from destruction. Such an attitude is his own need and not of the people who are reminding him. The Qur'ān has actually called their attention to the fact that their contradictory views and mental confusions about the great incident it is informing them of does not augur well of their fate. This is a case of eternal loss or good fortune. It is a great favour of the Qur'ān that it has shown them the way out from their contradictions and differences of opinion. They should have valued and treasured this blessing; it is, however, their misfortune that they have made it a matter of entertaining themselves.

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٤) ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٥)³

This is a very powerful warning to them that the sweet dreams that they are seeing will never come true. The fate the Qur'ān is warning

3. Certainly not! They shall soon come to know. Again, Certainly not! They shall soon come to know.

them of will soon manifest itself. Here the sentence has not been repeated merely to emphasize the claim; this repetition actually is a statement of fact. As I have pointed out at various places in this *tafsīr*, the Messengers of God have simultaneously warned their people of two punishments: firstly of the punishment which as per the established practice of God has been faced by all those who have denied their respective Messenger and secondly of the punishment they will face in the Hereafter. This warning sentence has been repeated keeping in view both these punishments.

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا (٦) وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا (٧) وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا (٨) وَجَعَلْنَا
تَوَمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا (٩) وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا (١٠) وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا (١١) وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ
سَبْعًا شِدَادًا (١٢) وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا (١٣) وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا (١٤)
لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا (١٥) وَجَعَلْنَا أَلْفَافًا (١٦) إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفُصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (١٧)⁴

In these verses, the Almighty has directed our attention to certain phenomena and signs found in this universe which overtly substantiate His power, providence, mercy, wisdom, *tawhīd* and the certainty of the Day of Judgement. So manifest and palpable are these signs that no upright person can deny them. At the end, it is surmised that whoever reflects on these signs will be forced to acknowledge that a Day of Judgement must come and its time of arrival is fixed in the eyes of the Creator.

First of all, attention is directed to the earth and the mountains set on it. If man denies reward and punishment in the Hereafter, then does he not reflect on the tremendous system of providence set up by the Almighty for man even though that it was not his right? As per this system, the Almighty has made this earth a place of comfort for him much like a cradle and has hammered into it these mountains as pegs so that the earth remains stable and is not shaken and rocked.

There are various aspects of wisdom behind setting mountains on the earth. The Qur'ān has alluded to them at various instances. In the previous *sūrah* also, a great benefit is referred to in this regard. In some verses, the wisdom behind this arrangement is unfolded by saying that mountains

4. Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? Not created you in pairs? Not made your sleep a means of comfort? Not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood? Not built above you seven sturdy skies and not placed in them a glowing lamp? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds so that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? – Indeed, the Day of Judgement has an appointed time.

maintain the balance of the earth and in their absence, it might reel away from its course taking man along with it: وَاللّٰهُ فِي الْاَرْضِ رَٰوٰسِيٌّ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ: (He set firm mountains upon the earth lest it should roll away with you, (16:15)). The reference here too is the same. If man reflects on that around him, he will conclude that it is impossible that the Almighty who is nurturing and nourishing him in such an elaborate manner not bring a day in which He rewards the grateful and the obedient and punishes the ungrateful and the disobedient. Providence always entails accountability. If this does not happen then it would only mean that the grateful and the ungrateful are alike in the eyes of the Creator. This is such an unbecoming and unseemly conclusion that it cannot be attributed to the Almighty.

Although the discourse in اَزْوَاجًا وَاَخْلَقْنَاكُمْ (and created you in pairs) is a statement; however, in reality, since it occurs in conjunction with the interrogative sentence that precedes it, it also must be regarded to be interrogative in nature. I have already explained this earlier. Indicated in this verse is the greatest source of comfort which the Almighty has provided humankind in this world. Man was not created alone; he was provided with a mate for his comfort and mental peace. It should be kept in consideration that in this world the Almighty has created everything in pairs and each member of a pair complements the other and cannot achieve the purpose of its creation without the other. Each member of a pair may apparently seem the opposite to the other; however providence has placed such apparent and hidden needs in each that it is together with its counterpart that both members receive comfort and satisfaction and achieve a higher objective. Just as this feature is present in both the opposing members of a pair, it is also present between a husband and wife. The Qur'ān has alluded to this fact in Sūrah Rūm in the following manner: وَمِنْ اٰيَاتِهٖ اَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا لَّا تَسْكُنُوْا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً (among His signs is that He created for you spouses from your species so that you receive comfort from them, and He planted love and sympathy in your hearts, (30:21)). The Qur'ān has presented this harmony and accord between the opposite members of a pair as an argument for *tawhīd* and the Hereafter, and I have explained this at various places in this *tafsīr*.

Consider now the next verses: وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا (and not made your sleep a means of comfort?). The real meaning of سُبَات and سُبَات is “to cut”; however, here it connotes both relief from hardship and comfort. Sleep is termed as سُبَات because it breaks the continuous process of movement and action and provides relief from hardship and also an opportunity to obtain peace and comfort so that the limbs get rejuvenated.

The verse وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا refer to the fact that the night has been made

as apparel. This is because just as apparel hides a person and provides him with peace and comfort, similarly the sheet of the night also hides him to protect him from incursive elements and thereby provides peace to him and the strength to once again enter into the demanding realm of action.

The verse *وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا* refers to the fact that the daytime has been made a time for making efforts to earn a livelihood.

There obviously is a purpose in directing our attention to these signs: if a discerning person reflects on them, he will come to the conclusion that neither do the night and day follow one another of their own accord nor is this procession of theirs without a meaning or a purpose. It is an all-wise and all-powerful God Who has put them through this process to serve Him, which of course means that mankind is able to benefit from this service. Mankind, as a result, should remain grateful to the Almighty Who has made such elaborate arrangements for their livelihood and sustenance, comfort and luxury. They should also remember that all this arrangement of providence necessitates that a day come wherein it can be judged who remained conscious about good and evil and who remained indifferent to it and then each be dealt with accordingly.

After directing attention to the signs present in the earth, attention is directed in the verse *وَيَبْنِيَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا* to the signs present in the sky. Though the word “sky” is not mentioned in words, however the attributes mentioned clearly indicate that it is the sky which is implied. What is meant by *شِدَادًا* is the same as what is said in Sūrah Mulk in the following words:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَاقُوتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ (٦٧: ٣-٤)

He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Then look: can you see any flaw? Look again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome. (67: 3-4)

The implication is that wherever a person lifts his eyes to view this boundless roof, he will find it absolutely sound and flawless.

The reference to “the lamp” in *وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا* (and not placed in them a glowing lamp?) is obviously to the sun. It is the sun which in this world is the source of light, heat and power. Were it not for the sun, the whole world would be plunged into darkness. It is evident from this that the sky and earth are not controlled by separate deities. Both are governed by the powerful and living God. Were it not so, how could there have been such

harmony between the sky and the earth? It is because of this harmony that the sun serves the needs of the inhabitants of the earth.

The word *الْمُعْصِرَاتِ* in *وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا* is conventionally used as an adjective for the clouds. This adjective denotes clouds replete with water and also for clouds which are in the process of producing rain. There is no essential difference in meaning in either case. The expression *مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا* refers to pounding, widespread and continuous rain.

The Qur'ān has substantiated all its basic claims through rain as has been discussed in various places in this *tafsīr*. Here the mention of rain points to the harmony between the sky and the earth thereby substantiating monotheism; however, the aspect of providence is manifestly present in this mention and providence itself is one of the important arguments that substantiates accountability and reward and punishment.

In the verses *وَجَنَّتِ أَلْفَاظًا لِيُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا* it is said that the purpose of this rain is to provide grain for man and grass and vegetation for his cattle. This rain also brings forth luxurious orchards.

The verse *إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفُصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا* summarizes what is discussed thus far: all this elaborate arrangement of providence and the system of sustenance that extends from the sky to the earth shows that the Almighty Who has done all this will not leave man unaccountable; He has definitely fixed a Day of Judgement in which He will gather all the people and judge their fates. He will judge who among them recognized the obligation of all these favours of providence and who among them remained indifferent to it. He will then reward or punish them accordingly.

The way this verse is mentioned here shows that the system of this world from within clearly proclaims the advent of such a day. Unfortunate are the people who are not listening to it. The sun, the moon, the clouds and the winds and other phenomena are put in the service of man so that his needs are provided and he does not show indifference to these blessings.

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا (١٨) وَفُتِحَتْ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا (١٩) وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (٢٠) إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا (٢١) لِلطَّاغِينَ مَابًا (٢٢) لَا يَبْقَى فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا (٢٣) لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا (٢٤) إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا (٢٥) جَزَاءً وَفَاقًا (٢٦) إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا (٢٧) وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَابًا (٢٨) وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا (٢٩) فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا (٣٠)⁵

5. The Day when the trumpet is sounded, all of you come forth in multitudes

After a portrayal of the arguments which substantiate a Day of Judgement in the previous verses, these verses portray the upheaval which will take place in the universe on that Day. Simultaneously, the fate encountered by the rebellious and the disobedient is depicted.

It is indicated in *يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا* that raising up mankind from its graves for the Day of Judgement will not be of the slightest of bother for the Almighty. At the sound of a trumpet, people will come out from their graves in multitudes and begin to tread towards the caller of God. At another place, it is said that people will emerge from their graves in the manner locusts emerge and will run straight towards the caller without any deviation.

The verse *وَفُتِحَتْ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا* asserts that this sky which today seems to be so strong and robust and is in the form of a dome that does not have any fissures will be opened on that day in such a manner that there will appear doors all over it.

The verse *وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا* stresses that these mountains which are set firm on the earth will be uprooted and set in motion; today they are solid rock; however, on that day they will be fragile like dunes of sand.

The verse *إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا* depicts that right after this upheaval, Hell will appear so suddenly as if it was lying in ambush behind the shield of this upheaval eager to become the abode of the rebellious; neither will any preparation be required for its appearance nor will it give any time to the rebellious to prepare themselves.

The word *أَحْقَابًا* in *لَا يَبْقَى فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا* means "centuries". At many places in the Qur'ān, it is explained as *خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا* (they will remain in it forever). Some have interpreted this word as "a long period" signifying the fact that Hell will come to an end one day. This opinion is not correct. To understand a discourse, it is essential to interpret the concise in the light of the comprehensive and not vice versa. The words *خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا* obviously are comprehensive and the word *أَحْقَابًا* is concise. Thus this concise must be understood in the light of the comprehensive and not the other way round. Moreover, this is a mention of the fate of the rebellious about whom the Qur'ān at other instances has specified that they will never be able to come out of Hell.

and the sky is flung open and therein appear gates all over and the mountains are set in motion so that they become a mirage. Indeed! Hell lurks in ambush; a place for the transgressors. They will abide therein for ages. Nothing cool will they taste therein nor will they have anything to drink except hot water and pus. A recompense according to their deeds. These people did not expect any accountability and had recklessly denied Our revelations and We have counted everything by writing it down. So taste it! We shall only increase torment for you.

In the verses *إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا* the word *غَسَّاقٌ* has been explained by lexicographers as blood and pus as well as boiling hot or dirty water. They will be denied anything cold there in totality. In Sūrah Mursalāt, even though the word *ظِلٌّ* (shade) occurs, it refers to the shade of smoke and it is further clarified about this shade that it will neither provide coolness to them nor will it save them from sparks of fire.

The verse *جَزَاءٌ وَفَاقًا* signifies that their punishment will be commensurate with their deeds. Whatever they earned in this world will be shown to them as an account. In the Hereafter, every good or evil deed will bear result as per its nature and it is this result which they will face.

The verses *وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَابًا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا* imply that these people were never afraid of any accountability and remained indifferent to it and recklessly denied the verses of God which were recited out to them to inform them of it. The word *كِذَابًا* is a verbal noun and is meant to emphasize the verb *كَذَّبُوا*. Although its verb stem (*wazn*) is different, however it means “denial”. If this aspect of emphasis is kept in mind, then an accurate rendering of this verse would be: “they recklessly or blatantly denied”.

The verse *وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا* points to the fact that though these people thought that they neither would have to face any accountability nor any punishment, the Almighty had counted each and every deed of theirs by recording it in writing. This account shows the elaborate arrangement in the preservation of the record of deeds. The implication is that there is no possibility of any error or forgetfulness in it.

The verse *فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا* is in the present tense to make a future event more effective. They are told that although they remained indifferent to their fate, they will now have to taste the results of their deeds; simultaneously, to make them completely lose hope of any improvement in the future, they are informed that it is only torment and punishment which they will keep facing; they should not hope of being given any respite; the change that will come in their circumstances will only be a further increase in their torment.

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (٣١) حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (٣٢) وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا (٣٣) وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا (٣٤) لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَابًا (٣٥) جَزَاءً مِنْ رَبِّكَ عَطَاءٌ حِسَابًا (٣٦)⁶

After a mention of the fate of the rebellious and the defiant, the fate of

6. Indeed, for the God-fearing is success on that Day. Orchards and grapes; blooming maidens of equal ages and overflowing cups. They will not hear therein any nonsense or any false accusation. This will be the reward from your Lord, exactly according to their deeds.

the righteous is mentioned so that the other side of the picture is also brought to light. There is great success for people who spent their lives fearing the Day of Judgement. It needs to be kept in consideration that the real thing which keeps a person on the right path is fear of the Hereafter. He who houses this fear in his heart is a righteous person and he who is devoid of it will soon be subdued by Satan and such a person then openly defies the Almighty.

The words حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (orchards and grapes) portray the success achieved by the righteous. Although the word حَدَائِقَ is commonly used for orchards of palm-trees; however, for such orchards too the height of delight was that the palm-trees be on the boundary while within it be grape vines and plantations of other fruits and vegetables. Here grapes are mentioned after orchards the way something specific is mentioned after the general.

The expression وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا mentions the *hurs* of Paradise. They are described as being in blooming youth and being of the same age. For mutual closeness, friendship and association, being of the same age is essential.

The expression وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا to the fact that they will be given brimming cups of pure wine. However, consumption of this wine will not intoxicate them so as to make them indulge in unseemly talk and perjuries – something which is an essential result of the wine drunk in this world. This wine will indeed take them to the height of delight and ecstasy but will not affect their senses. It will not inebriate them so as to make them indulge in indecent talk and in telling lies. It should be kept in mind that under the influence of liquor a person at times utters such nonsensical allegations that they become the basis of permanent enmity between families and tribes. Societies in which people become indifferent to honour and integrity ignore such customs; however, the Arabs were a very honourable people. If they would utter something even under the influence of liquor which would besmear the honour of someone, then this would have such far-reaching consequences that no amends could be made for it. The word كِدَابًا used by the Qur'ān refers to such conversation.

Earlier on, it is said of the disbelievers that they will be punished commensurate with their deeds. Here in the verse it is said that the believers will be rewarded commensurate with their deeds; the Almighty will not obliterate the slightest of their pious deeds; moreover, He has also promised them even more out of His grace.

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرَّحْمَانِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا (٣٧)⁷

The reward mentioned above is from the Lord of the heavens and earth and all that is between them and no one is His associate or partner nor can grant something to people on His behalf.

The words refer to the alleged deities of the disbelievers who think that they will be able to come in contact with these deities and that the latter will have the authority to ask God anything for these disbelievers and have it granted to them. The verse negates this false notion. No one will have even the authority to speak on His behalf; only those will speak in His presence who will be permitted to do so and they will only be able to speak the truth.

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَانُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٣٨)⁸

The Idolaters trusted the intercession of the angels the most; they would worship them regarding them to be daughters of God. The verse says that Gabriel and other angels will stand before the Almighty the way servants stand before their master; none of them would be able to initiate a conversation; only they will dare open their mouths who are permitted by God and will only speak the truth. In other words, if the Idolaters wrongly believe that their deities will be able to cajole and convince the Almighty to grant them their wishes and will also be able to intercede for them in whatever manner they desire, this will never materialize.

The word *الرُّوحُ* refers to Gabriel. This word is used for him at many places in the Qur'ān. He is the archangel; he was mentioned the foremost so that it may become plain to the disbelievers that if he has no authority, the others have no standing whatsoever in this regard. Some have interpreted this word to mean the souls of people; however, there is no reason to accept this interpretation.

ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَآبًا (٣٩)⁹

This is a declaration of fulfilment of a responsibility: it was essential to inform people of the arrival of that day and this has been done; it is now the responsibility of the people themselves; the day about which people

7. From the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them; the most Gracious on Whose behalf they will have no authority to say anything.

8. On the Day when Gabriel and the angels will stand arrayed. No one will speak unless the most Gracious allows and he shall speak the truth.

9. This Day is certain to come; so whoever wishes can make his abode towards his Lord.

are being warned is certain to come; no one can defer it nor will anyone be of any benefit to others; so it is only in a person's own benefit to make his abode towards his Lord.

Three things are evident from *فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَا بَا*.

Firstly, the only responsibility of God and His Prophet (sws) is to inform people of the day and it is not their responsibility to force its fear to enter the hearts of people.

Secondly, on that day, it is only the Almighty with Whom refuge can be sought; no one will be able to seek refuge with anyone else.

Thirdly, the way in which refuge can be sought with God is that one should adopt His path in this world. He who does not adopt His path in this world will not be able to attain His refuge in the Hereafter.

إِنَّا أَنْذَرْنَاكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا يَوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَالَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا (٤٠)¹⁰

This is the final warning; the imminent doom refers to the fact that after the advent of the Messenger of God among these people their fate is certain to be decided in this world, as per the established practice of the Almighty. This doom will be a prelude to the doom of the Hereafter. It is foolishness to regard the doom of the Hereafter to be far-off because this life has a short span and he who dies faces the Hereafter forthwith as is evidenced by the narrative *إذا مات أحدكم فقد قامت قيامته* (when anyone of you dies, his day of judgement is set up).¹¹

The implication of *وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَالَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا* is that on day the deeds of every person will be shown to him and those who have not prepared for this will cry out in anguish on their misfortune wishing that they had remained dust and that they never existed.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. *فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ* (gratitude be to God from the beginning to the end).

Rahmānābād

4th April, 1979 AD

6th Jamādī al-Awwal, 1399 AH

10. We have forewarned you of an imminent doom on the Day when a man will see the earning he would have sent forward, and the disbeliever will cry: "O Would that I were dust!"

11. 'Alā al-Dīn 'Alī al-Muttaqī ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa al-af'āl*, vol. 15 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), 289.